



Information Brief

Frameworks

Many frameworks offer schools guidance based on research and/or professional literature to assist them in their selection and organization of programs and services they provide students and families. These frameworks enhance the quality and effectiveness of the school's efforts to meet the needs of diverse populations of students by drawing upon programs and proven positive youth development practices, and preventing or ameliorating problems experienced by children and youth. The frameworks described in this document also provide an approach that integrates the work of schools with families and communities.

INTRODUCTION

The frameworks selected for description in this brief range from one that provides a comprehensive structure for viewing a complete continuum of programs and services provided by effective schools (*Success4* Critical Elements), to two that focus on positive youth development (Search Institute's Asset Development and America's Promise), and one that addresses risk-focused prevention (Hawkins and Catalano). All of the frameworks described address the collaborations of kids, families, schools, and communities.

SUCCESS4

Success4 is a statewide initiative to foster the healthy social, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral development of Iowa's children and youth. The initiative provides schools with a comprehensive framework to achieve this mission. (See the document entitled "Critical Elements" in this handbook.) The framework is based on an extensive review of the research and professional literature and consultation with nationally recognized experts. It contains a set of critical elements identified by that study that describe a socially, emotionally, intellectually, and behaviorally healthy and competent youth and a school that works with families and the community to foster that health and competence.

Critical Elements are essential features of improvement efforts and are considered crucial to the achievement of desired results. They should form the framework for assessing needs and planning strategies in improvement efforts. For each Critical Element, there is a set of indicators and essential practices rooted in research, the professional literature, and/or successful experience that promise to yield desired results.

"Kids" Critical Elements: *Success4* has identified 23 Critical Elements that characterize socially, emotionally, intellectually and behaviorally healthy and competent students, based on work related to resiliency, asset building, character development, and

employability skills. These elements are organized as Social (Interpersonal Relationships), Emotional (Personal Adjustment), Intellectual (Cognitive Functioning), and Behavioral (Personal Conduct).

"Capacity-Building" Critical Elements: 19 Critical Elements identify areas that ensure school staff has the human, material, time, and financial resources to work effectively with students, their families, and the community for the healthy development of children and youth. The elements fall into three (3) categories: Schools, Families, and Communities.

"System Development" Critical Elements: 13 Critical Elements outline the development of an organization to continuously improve itself and live out its mission and vision. Critical elements for system development include guiding principles (i.e., shared beliefs, vision and mission) that are used to make decisions, a collaborative culture that supports learning and change, creation of shared leadership structures, and widespread ownership of and commitment to the improvement effort.

"Successful schools reflect what research says: young people need both challenging content and emotionally and socially supportive school environments to achieve academically. They are not competing priorities, but reinforcing aspects of total student development."

- Draayer & Roehlkepartain, August 1995

Schools may use the *Success4* framework to identify priorities as part of their Comprehensive School Improvement planning process. They also may use *Success4* in combination with other frameworks to achieve the desired results for students as identified by the district's needs assessment and student learning goals. Unlike the other frameworks, the *Success4*

framework helps schools build a full continuum of programs and services to address the needs of all students.

ASSET DEVELOPMENT - SEARCH INSTITUTE

Current trends show a shift in thinking for work with youth – a shift toward promoting positive (strength-based) youth development and a shift away from a problem-solving orientation. Since 1989, the Search Institute of Minneapolis, MN, has conducted research grounded in the literature on resilience, prevention, and adolescent development. The study involved a survey of more than 500,000 youth, in grades 6 through 12, in more than 600 communities across the country and a review of more than 1,200 articles, chapters, books, and research reports (Scales and Leffert, 1999).

In an effort to identify a strengths-based approach, the Search Institute developed a framework of developmental assets. The framework is a research-based theory that the Institute continues to test. It incorporates 40 developmental assets critical to young people's healthy growth and development. These assets purport to protect young people from problem behaviors, as well as to promote positive attitudes and behaviors. When viewed together, they offer a set of benchmarks leading to healthy development. As of 1998, the Institute's "Healthy Community • Healthy Youth" initiative had helped more than 300 communities nationwide enlist institutions and individuals to build developmental assets in youth.

The 40 assets identified by the Search Institute are grouped into eight (8) categories:

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
Commitment to Learning	Support
Positive Values	Empowerment
Social Competencies	Boundaries & Expectations
Positive Identity	Constructive Use of Time

Research shows that when young people have enough assets, they are much more likely to lead healthy, positive, productive lives (*Youth Update*, February 1994). Overall, 62 percent of youth surveyed experienced less than 20 assets. Young people in the United States simply do not have the basic building blocks for healthy development.

The research findings point to a holistic approach to helping youth succeed. Assets must be integrated into the major areas of school life, including curriculum and instruction, organization and community partnerships. The Search Institute researchers found that children who feel better about school do better in school. Young people with 31-40 assets were more likely to report getting good grades than young people with 0-20 or even 21-30. The following assets are associated with academic achievement and good grades: school

engagement, achievement motivation, youth programs, bonding to school, adult role models, time at home, and interpersonal competence. On the other hand, only 25 percent of students surveyed by the Search Institute reported that they had a caring school climate (*Source Newsletter*, October 1999).

"A major reason that we are faced with so many crises among our youth – from violence, pregnancy, school dropouts, suicide – is that society no longer provides them with the developmental infrastructure (assets) they need to grow up healthy."

- Peter L. Bensen

The more assets that youth experience, the more likely they are to make positive choices and avoid unhealthy behaviors. Many of the assets don't require a lot of money to advance. Because they are built primarily through relationships, what they do require is time and commitment. Young people need caring adults and friends who support, encourage, and guide them. There needs to be a commitment to nurturing the qualities that guide choices and create a sense of centeredness, purpose, and focus, shaping dispositions that encourage wise, responsible and compassionate judgments.

Everyone can build assets. The framework encourages all members of a community to become involved in asset building. It makes clear that everyday acts of asset building by ordinary citizens are equally as important as, if not more important than, efforts by skilled professionals. The assets clearly show important roles that families, schools, faith communities, neighborhoods, youth organizations, and others in the community play in young people's lives.

"Ultimately, rebuilding and strengthening the developmental infrastructure in a community is conceived less as a program implemented and managed by professionals and more the mobilization of public will and capacity. A major target for this level of community engagement is the creation of a normative culture in which all residents are expected by virtue of their membership in the community to promote the positive development of children and adolescents."

- Peter L. Bensen

Youth are of great value when involved in leadership, service, and other positive activities through which they can contribute to their communities and the world. Communities can most effectively instill developmental assets in youth when many sectors in the community come together to develop a vision for positive youth development and to work together to

surround every child and teenager with the repeated assets of support, discipline, structure, and values.

AMERICA'S PROMISE

America's Promise is a Washington, D.C. based organization that was founded in Philadelphia, PA, following the Presidents' Summit for America's Future on April 27-29, 1997, with General Colin Powell as Founding Chairman. All living presidents, and First Lady Nancy Reagan representing her husband, urged the nation to make youth a priority. Included in this call to action was a challenge to the nation to commit itself to fulfilling five (5) promises:

- *Promise One:* Ongoing relationships with caring adults-parents, mentors, tutors or coaches. Resilient youth have at least one adult who cares deeply for them. Luckier still are youth who have a loving parent and at least one adult friend or mentor who care about them, act as role models, and often connect them with other resources and opportunities.
- *Promise Two:* Safe places with structured activities during non-school hours. Young people need structure and physically and emotionally safe places to be. Before and after school programs help fulfill this promise.
- *Promise Three:* Healthy start and future. Healthy start is not limited to early childhood but, instead, also pertains to a healthy start for adulthood represented by the entire journey through childhood and adolescence.
- *Promise Four:* Marketable skills through effective education. Significant shifts in the workplace and the new skills needed to succeed there make it difficult for young people to pass this critical developmental milestone from adolescence to adulthood.
- *Promise Five:* Opportunities to give back through community service. Giving young people an opportunity to serve others is an important strategy that sees them as part of the solution, not the problem. Service-learning helps to fulfill this promise.

"Employers increasingly need workers who can think, learn new skills rapidly, work in teams, and solve problems creatively. Yet too few youth, whether college bound or not, have these skills, or in many cases, even basic work skills."

- America's Promise

America's Promise, like the Search Institute framework, focuses on asset building. Over 500 national organizations and 550 Communities of Promise and states form an alliance committed to

fulfilling all five promises. Seven (7) alliance members are in Iowa.

COMMUNITIES THAT CARE – SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH GROUP

Communities that Care is a community operating system that provides research-based tools to help communities promote the positive development of children and youth and prevent adolescent substance use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence. This risk-focused prevention framework, developed by the Social Development Research Group, University of Washington, incorporates both risk and protective factors (assets). It can provide helpful guidance when a school wishes to target resources to risk-focused prevention for populations of students in greatest need.

Researchers make the case that "prevention policies and programs should focus on [both] the reduction of risk and the promotion of protective influences if the reduction of substance use, crime, and violence or the improvement of academic performance are intended outcomes."

- Pollard, Hawkins, and Arthur, 1999

Risk and protective factors exist across multiple domains: school, community, family, and individual/peer.

Risk Factors: Risk factors are those characteristics, variables, or hazards that, if present for a given individual, predict the development of problem behaviors such as adolescent substance use, teen pregnancy, delinquency, and violent behavior. These factors, which are based on 30 years of research, exist in all domains: schools, families, communities, individuals and their peers. They are present across the entire developmental continuum and operate in similar ways across races, genders, and socioeconomic groups (*Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy*, 1995).

Protective Factors: Protective factors buffer the risk factors by reducing the effect of exposure to them, and thus, result in reduced incidence of problem behavior. Protective factors, like risk factors, are research-based and exist across the continuum and demographic groups. These factors fall into three (3) basic categories: individual characteristics (positive social orientation, high intelligence, and resilient temperament); social bonding (warm, affective relationships, especially with positive adults, and the skills, opportunity, and recognition for meaningful involvement in conventional activities), and healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior.

SUMMARY

Some schools and/or communities have already adopted one of these frameworks for their local efforts. For those who have not, consideration of doing so

might prove worthwhile. The framework adopted should be one that best serves the needs of those who are adopting it.

LEARN MORE ABOUT IT:

- **Web sites:**
 - *Success4* <http://www.state.ia.us/educate/programs/success4/index.html>
 - The Search Institute: <http://www.search-institute.org>
 - Social Development Research Group (Communities That Care): <http://www.drp.org>
 - America's Promise: <http://www.americaspromise.org>
- **In this Handbook:** See additional briefs in this section. For information beyond the scope of this handbook, see the Resources Section.